




DRAFT
MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council

CC: Marc A. Ott, City Manager
Robert D. Goode, P.E., Assistant City Manager

FROM: Robert Spillar, P.E., Director 
Austin Transportation Department

DATE: August 11, 2014

SUBJECT: **CAMPO Transportation Policy Board (TPB) Meeting Agenda**

The Transportation Policy Board will meet on Monday, August 11, 2014 beginning at 6:00 p.m. in Room 3.102 of the Joe C. Thompson Conference Center, located on the University of Texas campus at 2405 Robert Dedman Drive, for their regular meeting. Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) staff has prepared an agenda packet ([Agenda](#)).

Of all the agenda items for the regular TPB meeting, the following are of greatest importance to the City:

- **Action Item 12, Consider and take appropriate action to authorize the Executive Director to draft and submit a letter of support for TxDOT's grant application to study high-speed rail between Austin and Houston**

Unfortunately very minimal information was provided in the CAMPO back-up; however, City staff researched the item and consulted TxDOT staff. The TxDOT Rail Division staff will be present at the TPB meeting for discussion. The TxDOT Rail Division is submitting a grant application to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to study high-speed rail between Dallas-Fort Worth-Austin-Houston, TxDOT has requested a letter of support from CAMPO in order to make the application more competitive at the Federal level.

Background

Prior federal grant funds were awarded to TxDOT in 2011 for the: "New Core Express Service from Dallas/Fort Worth to Houston" in the amount of \$15 million under the FRA High-Speed Intercity Passenger Rail Program (HSIPR). The funds were to conduct preliminary engineering and environmental work to evaluate potential routes and identify a preferred alternative to meet the service level requirements for the DFW to Houston corridor. Core Express services are defined as frequent trains at 125 – 250+ miles per hour. This work, as well as the Texas-Oklahoma Passenger Rail Study, is on-going and related to the current application to advance the Texas State Rail Plan.

In January 2014 U.S. Secretary of Transportation Anthony Foxx announced the FRA, TxDOT and the Texas Central Railway came to agreement to prepare two environmental studies that will lay the groundwork for high-speed rail between Dallas-Fort Worth and Houston. TxDOT Executive Director

Phil Wilson noted TxDOT would sponsor the environmental impact study on the Dallas-Fort-Worth-Arlington portion while the private sector will sponsor the environmental impact study for the Houston-Dallas corridor. This is a public-private partnership; the Texas Central Railway is a private, for-profit entity.

Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Project Call

The current application by TxDOT is in response to a Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) published in the Federal Register July 11, 2014 (Vol. 79, No. 133). Approximately \$36 million is available for awards under this solicitation. Eligible projects include: (i) eligible intercity passenger rail grade crossing improvement projects, (ii) positive train control implementation projects, and (iii) Passenger Rail Corridor Investment Plan (PRCIP) projects. Applications are due September 15, 2014.

The NOFA encourages applicants to constrain federal fund requests to a maximum of \$3 million per application due to funding limits. Eligible entities are states, groups of states, interstate compacts and public agencies established by one or more states and having responsibility for providing intercity passenger rail service.

Passenger Rail Corridor Investment Plans consist of two distinct components: (i) a service development plan, and (ii) a corridor-wide environmental documentation. Applicants requesting funds for development of a Passenger Rail Corridor Investment Plan must apply for any necessary work to develop *both* elements. If the applicant has already completed one of these documents or a component, FRA must have accepted that document as meeting the minimum requirements in order for the applicant to receive a grant to complete the remaining components. Similarly, applicants that already completed or are in process of developing elements of a Passenger Rail Corridor Investment Plan through an FRA grant may request additional Federal funds to expand the scope or geographic study area of the existing planning effort.

The TxDOT grant request to FRA, from the new FY14 Omnibus Authority (\$19,827,000 total available) is for implementation of a part of the statewide Texas Rail Plan: specifically, to prepare a Corridor Level environmental document (Tier I level), and to prepare a Service Development Plan.

City of Austin Recommendation:

City staff concurs with the CAMPO staff recommendation for the TPB to authorize the Executive Director to draft and submit a letter of support for TxDOT's grant application to study high-speed rail between Dallas –Austin-Houston. The TxDOT application would not diminish available potential funds to Lone Star or the City of Austin at this time: the HSIPR is for proposed 'bullet train' systems operating at high speeds. Eligible entities are states, groups of states, interstate compacts and public agencies established by one or more states and having responsibility for providing intercity passenger rail service. An additional transportation connection between Austin and Houston could contribute to economic development in both cities and the state as a whole.

■ ***Presentations and Reports, 13 D, 2040 Plan Update***

The last page in the Agenda Backup outlines the progress of the 2040 Plan Update. Of note, the TAC made a first attempt in a workshop before their regularly scheduled meeting on July 23rd to prioritize the Comprehensive List of Projects for use in developing a draft preferred scenario. CAMPO staff anticipates that the TPB is on schedule to review benchmark model runs in September and choose the preferred scenario in October.

The 2040 Plan must be adopted in May 2015 in order for the CAMPO region to remain in compliance with federal transportation planning requirements and associated federal funding for transportation projects.

City staff will attend the Transportation Policy Board meeting. If your office has additional questions related to the agenda or would like an individual briefing prior to the meeting, please do not hesitate to contact Gordon Derr at 974-7228.

Please let me know if you need additional information.

cc: W. Gordon Derr
Council Executive Assistants
Staff